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## Don't be a Tattletale! Part 2

In our last column we discussed the benefits of developing associate implications during our interviews with dishonest employees. As we reported previously, our review of old cases revealed that 30 percent of employees we interviewed had knowledge of another associate stealing from the organization. When we looked at the ages of these individuals, we discovered that approximately 90 percent of people with knowledge of theft activity fell within the 18 to 32 years of age range. We wanted to focus on the techniques that can be used during the interview to elicit implications of other employees' theft activity.

### Management Focus

The biggest reason implications are not obtained is the lack of emphasis placed on them during interviews. In most of the interviews we have reviewed for companies, dishonest employee implications were not sought by the interviewer or they were merely an afterthought and given only marginal effort.

First and foremost, management must set an expectation that organization interviewers are to ask and attempt to obtain admissions relating to the knowledge of other employees stealing. Without this emphasis and encouragement, it is unlikely that there will be a change in the interviewer's habits and work product.

Encouraging the development of implication will increase the organization's productivity in developing new cases in a proactive fashion. There is already a tremendous expenditure by most companies to identify dishonest employees and failing to take advantage of this fertile ground during interviews would seem to be a terrible waste.

Developing a knowledge admission is more likely in situations where people work closely together, such as in retail or warehousing environment. The level of interaction and communication between employees leads to observation of and conversations relating to theft activity. This is less likely to occur with employees working in an office or administrative capacity since they work more independently.

Management should also encourage investigators as part of the case preparation to identify employees who work closely together or appear to be friends. Should one associate be discovered to be dishonest, it is likely that the other will at the very least have knowledge of the counterproductive behavior, if not be dishonest as well.

There may also be indications during rapport building or the preliminary interview with the associate about relationships with other employees. While the relationship may be positive or negative, it may provide an indication of associates to ask about in the latter stages of the development process.

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### Suspicious

Another useful avenue is the development of suspicions relating to dishonesty or counterproductive behavior. Many employees are willing to discuss suspicions since this seems less serious, and frankly different, than actually telling on someone.

Developing an employee's suspicions of another's dishonesty requires a several part process. First is the offer of limited confidentiality. The interviewer assures the employee any suspicions will not be discussed with the person named. In addition the interviewer must assert an investigation has been conducted and information revealed.

*"Who do you suspect? Before you say anything let me say this, if this is simply a suspicion, no one is going to go back to that person and say that you suspected them of doing anything. No one gets interviewed based on another's suspicions unless those suspicions have been substantiated by the investigation.*

*"In fact, when we conduct an investigation we are aware of any number of incidents occurring within the organization. Your suspicion might be completely unfounded, so before we talk to anyone we would want to look into your ideas to determine if they were correct based on our investigation.*

*"Who do you suspect?"*

Note that the interviewer asks for an admission assumptively: “Who do you suspect?” Had he asked, “Do you suspect anyone?” he would likely have received a denial.

Using logic an interviewer may form a link analysis to establish the web of dishonesty between associates. For example, a cashier in a food court is observed giving away free food to several employees. Those employees are now obligated to reciprocate a similar favor to the cashier. How might they accomplish such an action? Plus, why would they stop at one favor and one person when there could be others to obligate?

## Rationalizations

The cornerstone of reducing resistance during an interrogation is the use of rationalizations. Whenever resistance to making an admission arises, the interviewer returns to rationalizations as a means to minimize the seriousness of the issue or focus the attention of the subject on the resolution of the situation, rather than its seriousness.

The interviewer must begin by overcoming the stigma of being a tattletale that is ingrained in our society. Initially, the interviewer reframes the situation in a more positive vein by looking at it through the lens of establishing the individual’s truthfulness in the interview.

As with any admission, the development of knowledge is more likely to occur when the individual believes the interviewer knows the information already. It is less threatening and easier to talk about something already known than to broach the subject the first time. The interviewer must appear confident and correctly interpret the behavioral responses of the subject when he is asked whether or not he knows of another associate stealing from the organization. The slight hesitation or break of eye contact may indicate the employee’s reluctance to make an admission.

Shifting blame for the other associate’s theft activity is another perfect avenue for rationalization. The interviewer suggests anything another employee has done wrong should not taint another associate’s reputation. In addition, offering information already known in the investigation only substantiates his truthfulness and cooperation during the interview.

Rationalizations can also be constructed examining the virtue of stepping up and doing the right thing at the right time. For example, if someone knew an individual might harm himself, but said nothing; he then contributed to the injuries that followed in some way. However, by speaking up he could take pride in doing the right thing, plus having saved anguish for other people.

Another rationalization might revolve around protecting the company during difficult economic times. The interviewer could offer examples of how people are losing jobs and benefits as a result of the downturn of the economy. Allowing employees to continue to take money or merchandise during these times jeopardizes everyone’s job and financial future.

- “We had such a great conversation I know this couldn’t be your idea...”
- “We always have ongoing investigations and I don’t want someone else’s actions to reflect on you.”

- “Peer Pressure... impress others... go along with the group...”
- “We already have an idea of who else is involved. What I am looking for is an opportunity to demonstrate your willingness to start making things right.”

## Areas of Inquiry

Always work for names by using the following types of questions.

- “Who taught you?”
- “Who did you teach or tell how to do this?”
- “Who told you this was possible?”
- “Who did you see?”
- “Who did you hear bragging?”
- “Who ‘forced’ you to be a lookout?”
- “Who acted as a lookout for you?”
- “Who do you know was getting away with it that caused you to try?”
- “Who talked to you about stealing?”
- “Who else is disgruntled with the company?”

Peer pressure is one of the most important aspects of people’s lives during their late teens to late twenties. Being with friends and doing what they do shapes behavior, and, more importantly, dishonest behavior. Encourage and measure your interviewers’ performance in obtaining implications and watch case productivity rise. ■

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